DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 924 PS 029 153

AUTHOR Fowler, Frances C.
TITLE Marching to a Different Drummer: The Elementary School Reform Movement in Germany.
PUB DATE 2000-04-00
NOTE 48p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Educational Change; *Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; Foreign Countries; *Politics of Education; Program Descriptions; Qualitative Research
IDENTIFIERS *Germany; Politicians

ABSTRACT

Noting that the German educational reform movement has deviated significantly from the international norm with its emphasis on progressive education and open instruction reminiscent of the 1960s, this study examined the elementary school reform movement in Germany, using analytical frameworks drawn from policy analysis and sociological theory, to identify reasons for this deviation. Information on the German school system provided the educational context for the study. The methodology involved qualitative case study methods and was limited to states comprising the former West Germany. Data were collected from various states in fall 1996 and spring 1997 and from the Internet in summer 1999, including interviews with educators and government officials, observations conducted in schools, educational documents, and position statements of educational, professional, and governmental organizations. The findings suggest that the policy agenda of the elementary education reform movement is rooted in a dual discourse: one political and related to the mistreatment of teachers and low esteem in which elementary education is held in Germany, and the other, pedagogical and related to perceived deterioration in family life and corresponding childhood psychological problems. Data suggest that few of the political reforms have been adopted and the implementation of pedagogical reforms appears to be limited and spotty, suggesting that leaders have failed to convince either politicians or classroom teachers. Evidence further suggests that elementary reform has support in the education ministries, but that considerable opposition to its program exists among politicians eager to save money and among skeptical grassroots educators. (Contains 50 references.) (KB)

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Marching to a Different Drummer: The Elementary School Reform Movement in Germany

Frances C. Fowler
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

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Frances C. Fowler
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Presented at the annual meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
New Orleans, Louisiana
April, 2000

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Introduction

Policy scholars have long recognized that the school reform movement which swept the US during the last two decades is part of an international movement affecting most developed countries. They also generally recognize that, although the reform movements in different nations are by no means identical, they usually share certain themes. For example, the European scholars Husén, Tuijnman, and Halls (1992) identify the emerging educational policy themes of European countries during the 1980s as: increased school autonomy, the reintroduction of grading systems in countries which had abolished them in the 1960s and 1970s, the development of national assessment programs, and "the quality and coherence of schooling" (p. 95). Similarly, researchers with the OECD assert that there are "common strands. . . .[in the reform efforts of various nations which] include a stronger voice for the users of the education system, more choice and competition, devolution of responsibility to schools, and a new emphasis on accountability" (OECD, 1995, p. 14).

The nations investigated in the OECD study included the United States as well as European countries. It is somewhat surprising, then, to encounter a contemporary educational reform movement which, with its emphasis on progressive education and open instruction, is reminiscent of the 1960s. This German movement advocates the reform of elementary education, with the goal of establishing "a modern elementary school which is suitable for children" (Faust-Siehl, et al., 1996, p. 9) and which "is not just an instructional institution, but also an institution for social learning" (Ibid., p.14). [All translations from the German are my own.] My purpose in this study is to explore this phenomenon, using analytical frameworks drawn from policy analysis

and sociological theory in an attempt to explain why this German educational reform movement deviates significantly from the international norm. In doing so, I will first develop a conceptual framework for analyzing the German elementary school reform movement, and then I will describe my methodology. After providing information on the German school system for readers who are unfamiliar with the German educational context, I will present the major findings of this study. Finally, those findings will be discussed.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on three theoretical frameworks. One is comes from Wirt and Harman (1986a, 1986b) and illuminates how unique features of the German policy environment have led to an unusual variant of education reform. The other two are based on the work of Paris (1995) and Bernstein (1996); they facilitate both describing the German reform and situating it in the broader context of educational reform. The first framework was developed by Wirt and Harman (1986a) in their comparative study of the impact of world-wide recession on the educational policy initiatives of six nations. Starting with the fact that "the interdependence of the international community has become a commonplace of social analysis" (p. 1), they sought to determine how countries of various types reacted to the same major event occurring on a global scale. Their analysis of the countries' different responses to the recession led them to hypothesize that educational policy is almost always affected by major events in the "global village," but that national responses to global events vary because international influences are filtered through the "prism" of at least three "national qualities." These national qualities included the country's economic resources, the nature of its political system (federal vs. unitary, presidential vs. parliamentary, and single party vs. two party vs. multiparty system), and its national cultural

values. They even found one country--China--whose distinctive institutions and values were such that it was able to resist the effects of the recession (Wirt and Harman, 1986b).

The second and third theoretical frameworks make it possible to situate the content of the German educational reform movement in relationship to other reforms and pedagogies. The first of these is Paris's (1995) typology of three educational reform ideologies. He argues that in the United States, pluralistic and often conflicting themes of educational reform emerge from different ideological positions. He groups these "reform themes" into three broad categories. The first is the "New Common School" whose advocates are most concerned about political and social integration. Paris identifies two versions of the "New Common School" theme. The advocates of the "moral/civic" version argue that public schools should primarily work to teach children how to be good citizens and moral human beings; in contrast, advocates of the "academic" version of the common school theme are more concerned about teaching a common culture and good thinking skills to all children. The second general reform theme which Paris describes is "Human Capital." Its advocates value achievement and productivity above everything else and see the school as primarily preparing children to find their place in the economy, whether they support the vocational education version of the "human capital" theme or the more academically focused version of it which advocates a challenging curriculum to prepare an elite for management positions. Paris's third theme, "Clientelism," somewhat paradoxically includes the advocates of both expanded school services and school choice. He argues that both of these varieties of educational reform assume "the basic notion that schools should be responsive to the needs of their clients" (Paris, 1995, p. 147).

The third theoretical framework is based on Bernstein's (1973, 1990, 1996) distinction

between visible and invisible pedagogies. Visible pedagogies are those in which "the hierarchical relations between teacher and pupils, the rules of organization (sequence pace) and the criteria [for evaluation are] explicit and so known to the pupils" (Bernstein, 1996, p. 112). What most people think of as traditional, teacher-centered education uses a visible pedagogy. Visible pedagogies are strongly classified; the boundaries between subjects, teachers, classrooms, and the external world are clear and carefully maintained. They are also strongly framed; school authorities, including the classroom teacher, determine what will be learned, in what order it will be learned, and how quickly curriculum material will be covered. In visible pedagogies, evaluation criteria are clear and pupils always know how well or poorly they are performing. Research conducted by Bernstein and his associates suggests that members of the old middle class whose jobs are close to actual production processes--such as management employees in a steel or garment factory--are likely to favor visible pedagogies. In contrast, an invisible pedagogy is one in which the hierarchical relations, rules of organization, and criteria for evaluation are hidden from the pupils and, to a great extent from their parents, but not from their teachers. An example of an invisible pedagogy is the open space school in which children choose their own activities in various learning centers and are apparently free to direct their own education. Invisible pedagogies are weakly classified; they advocate the blurring of boundaries by interdisciplinary teaching, team teaching, multi-age grouping, and encouraging more linkages between the school and the outer world. They are also weakly framed; pupils have considerable input into what will be learned and can set their own pace as they work to learn the material. Evaluation criteria are unclear. For example, teachers may not give grades and their comments may praise a pupil's creativity although in reality the child's achievement is below average for her age. Bernstein's

research indicates that the new middle class tends to support invisible pedagogies. The new middle class consists of people who work in the field of "symbolic control" such as employees in "religious [and] legal agencies (regulators), social services, child guidance, counselling agencies (*repairers*), education (*reproducers*), universities, research centres, research councils, private foundations (*shapers*), civil service, central and local government (*executors*)" (Bernstein, 1996, p. 112)

Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative case study. Yin (1984) defines the case study as: "an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). In this case the phenomenon investigated was the contemporary German elementary education movement, and its real-life context is German society in the states which made up the former West Germany. The study was limited to the states which made up the former West Germany because for the last decade the major educational reform in the former East Germany has consisted of efforts to align its educational system with that of the former West Germany (Rust & Rust, 1995). Data were collected in the German states of the Rhineland-Palatinate, North Rhine-Westphalia, and the Saarland in the fall of 1996 and in the states of the Rhineland-Palatinate, the Saarland, and Hesse in the spring of 1997. They were also gathered from the Internet in the summer of 1999. Multiple sources of evidence were used, since four different types of data were collected, leading to the establishment of four data sets.

The first set consisted of twelve interviews which I conducted in Germany in 1996 and 1997 with a total of fourteen different respondents. (One interview was a group interview

involving four German educators, and one respondent was interviewed twice.) The respondents included an elementary teacher who was also an official of the *Grundschulverband* [Elementary Education Association] and the *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* [Education and Science Union], a teacher who was also an in-service coordinator, two principals, five inspectors, four ministry officials, and a professor of elementary education. Interviews lasted from half an hour to two hours. I took notes during each interview and expanded the notes as soon as possible after the interview. The expanded notes were entered into a word processing program.

The second data set consists of observations which I conducted. Eleven observations were conducted in schools; one school was in Hesse, one was in North Rhine Westphalia, one was in the Saarland, and eight were in the Rhineland-Palatinate. Eight of the schools observed were elementary schools, but three were secondary schools; two were *Hauptschulen* (schools for less academically gifted children) and one was a *Gymnasium* (an academic high school). In all cases but one, inspectors or ministry officials arranged the school visits, and in all cases but two I was accompanied during my observations by at least one administrator. Typically, we sat in a row of chairs set up for us in the back of the classroom and observed a lesson, in a fashion similar to that used in Germany for evaluating student teachers. We also usually spent some time in the teachers' room, interacting with the staff. One elementary school visit was set up by an official of the Grundschulverband, who also taught fourth grade in a suburb of Frankfurt. During my visit to her school, I spent time in several classrooms and was never accompanied by an administrator. The other exception was my visit to the *Gymnasium;* there the chairman of the English Department had arranged a series of classes for me to visit, but I observed them entirely on my own. Obviously, most of my school observations were carefully controlled--a fact which is

relevant to my interpretation of this reform movement. My school visits varied in length from an hour to the entire school day. I took notes during them, and expanded the notes as soon as possible afterwards. In addition to the school observations, I attended two in-service programs for teachers in the Saarland. The first occurred in the fall of 1996; it was a half-day in-service on teaching French in the elementary school. The second, which occurred in the spring of 1997, was a full-day science workshop on the "summer meadow" and included lunch with the presenters and participants. During the workshops, I took notes which I expanded as soon afterwards as possible. In addition, I summarized conversations in which I engaged with the presenters and participants and incorporated them into the observation notes.

The third data set consists of German educational documents, most of which were given to me or recommended to me by the interviewees. Thirty documents were analyzed for this study. They included publications of the Grundschulverband and ministries of education as well as textbooks used in teacher preparation programs. The documents were reduced into English language summaries and entered into a word processing program.

Finally, in the spring and summer of 1999 I used several search engines to locate current materials about the reform movement on the Internet. With the descriptors *Grundschulreform* [elementary education reform] and *Grundschule* [elementary school] + the names of the ten German states which made up the former West Germany (*Bayern*, *Rheinland-Pfalz*, *Baden-Wurttemberg*, *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, *Schleswig-Holstein*, *Saarland*, *Hessen*, *Brandenburg*, *Berlin*, and *Bremen*) I located twelve Internet texts on the subject. The texts were the following: (1) a recent position statement by the *Grundschulverband*; (2) a statement by the Bavarian *Staatsinstitut für Schulpädagogik und Bildungsforschung* [State Institute for School Pedagogy

and Educational Research]; (3) a position statement by the *Bäyerischer Philologenverband* [Bavarian Philologists' Association--an organization made up of *Gymnasium* teachers]; (4) a statement by the Bavarian Social Democratic Party; (5) a position paper by the *LandesschülerInnenkonferenz-Berlin* [State Students' Council of Berlin]; (6) a position statement by *Bezirkselternausschuß-Reinickendorfer Schulen* [District Parents' Commission-Reinickendorfer Schools in Berlin]; (7) a position paper by the *Schulleitungsverbände* [Principals' Associations of Berlin]; (8) a report by the Berlin Ministry of Education; (9) a statement on education policy by a Bavarian political party, the CSU; (10) a statement on education policy by the Christian Democratic Party in the state of Lower Saxony; (11) a position statement by the Green Party in the state of the Rheinland-Palatinate; (12) an article by Rudi Krawitz, a professor at the University of Koblenz-Landau, carried on the web site of the publisher Julius Klinkhardt. These sources provided information about the position of a broad range of policy actors and added information from three additional states to the data base.

Standard methods of qualitative data analysis were used (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Data analysis was guided by these research questions:

Overarching Question: How can the differences between the policy reform agenda of the German elementary school reform movement and the reform agendas of most other developed countries be explained?

Subsidiary Questions: 1. How did the elementary education reform movement originate and how has it evolved since its inception?

2. What reforms are on the German elementary education reform movement's policy agenda and , in terms of Paris's and Bernstein's theories, how can they be analyzed?

3. To what extent have the desired reforms been implemented?

4. Which policy actors support and which oppose the reform movement?

5. What aspects of the German policy environment explain the differences between the German movement and other reform movements?

The German Educational System

The West German educational system was one of the most conservative public school systems in Europe, and with reunification it has been imposed on the public school systems of the states which made up the former German Democratic Republic (Phillips, 1995b [1992]). Although Germany has kindergartens, they are not part of the public school system per se since they are commonly operated by either municipal governments or churches. The public school program begins with the four year *Grundschule*, or elementary school. The *Grundschule* is a creature of the Weimar Republic, which sought to democratize public education after World War I by establishing a "common" school that all children would attend, regardless of social class. During the period immediately after World War I, many educators and politicians sought to establish a six-year common elementary school, but conservative forces managed to force a compromise on a four year program. Only the states of Berlin and Bremen currently have six year elementary schools. Like German secondary schools, the *Grundschule* is open between 8:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. However, unlike them it does not offer its pupils a full morning of instruction each school day. Rather, elementary pupils attend class only part of the time during the five hour block of instruction, meaning that parents or other care givers must see that the children for whom they are responsible are escorted to school and picked up at varying times, depending on the day of the week (Dichanz & Zahorik, 1998; Fishman & Martin, 1987; Mitter,

1995 [1986]).

After completing the *Grundschule*, children attend one of several types of secondary schools; the most commonly attended are the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule*, and the *Gymnasium*. The *Hauptschule* [main school] enrolls students from grades five through nine; after finishing this five-year long program, most young people enter into apprenticeships in business or industry, attending school part time for two or three more years. Once the most popular secondary school, the *Hauptschule* has fallen on hard times; today it is widely perceived as a school for slower children, poor children, and the children of immigrants. The *Realschule* [real school--or school which focuses on the real world] offers a six-year program which combines more challenging academic courses than the *Hauptschule* with technical programs which prepare young people for positions in such fields as nursing, accounting, and some forms of engineering. Its graduates receive a credential which entitles them to attend technical universities. With the decline of the popularity of the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule* has attracted far more students than it did at one time. Finally, the *Gymnasium* offers a rigorous academic program which lasts nine years and leads to the *Abitur*, a school-leaving examination whose passage is the prerequisite for university admissions. Forty years ago the *Gymnasium* was strictly for a tiny academic elite whom it prepared for such professions as law, medicine, university teaching, the priesthood, or teaching at the *Gymnasium* level. The *Gymnasium* has become increasingly popular with German parents and students, however; today it enrolls about a third of German young people and is no longer truly elite. A fourth type of secondary school is the *Gesamtschule*, or comprehensive secondary school, patterned on the American high school, the British comprehensive school, and the French *collège*. During the 1960s and 1970s, German reformers tried to establish the *Gesamtschule* as

the only secondary school, but failed. Today the *Gesamtschule* option is available in some areas, particularly in cities in the northern part of the country, but it is not particularly popular (Dichanz & Zahorik, 1998; Phillips, 1995a [1987]; Rust & Rust, 1995).

At the end of the fourth year of the *Grundschule*, a decision must be made about which type of secondary school each child will attend. At one time, this decision was based entirely on an examination; then the examination was eliminated and selection was based on the teacher's recommendation. Increasingly, however, state parliaments are giving parents the power to make the decision, at least temporarily. Today, it is common for fourth grade teachers to make a recommendation, but parents have the right to enroll their child in whichever type of secondary school they prefer. At the end of the sixth grade, however, the secondary schools can make a binding placement recommendation which may require a child to transfer to a lower status secondary school (Rust & Rust, 1995). For example, while I was visiting a *Hauptschule* in the Rhineland-Palatinate, the principal pointed out to me a girl who had been "sent back" from a *Realschule* to their *Hauptschule*.

Findings.

History of the Elementary School Reform Movement

In a speech given at an elementary education conference held in Bielefeld and Frankfurt in 1979, Dietmar Bolsho (1980) identified three key years in the history of the German elementary school. The first was 1919, when the Weimar Republic established--in the face of much political opposition--the four year common elementary school which almost all German children now attend. The second was 1959 when, during a period of numerous reform proposals for secondary education, the Commission for Education announced that the elementary school had developed its

own pedagogy and procedures and did not require any major changes. The third was 1969, when elementary education professor Erwin Schwartz organized a national Elementary School Conference in Frankfurt with three major themes: "Talent and Learning in Childhood," "Equalizing Education in the Elementary School, " and "The Content of Foundation-Laying Education." At this conference, Schwartz and others called for thoroughgoing reforms of the elementary school in spite of the widely held view that it was quite satisfactory as it was. Calling for reform was not a new activity for Schwartz, who had the distinction of being the first holder of the first German chair in elementary school pedagogy --which had been established at the University of Frankfurt. In 1967 he had established a magazine, *Grundschule* [Elementary School], advocating far-reaching reforms of the elementary school; and in 1968 he had founded the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* [Elementary School Work Group] (Bolsho, 1980; Ipfling, 1995; Sandfuchs, 1995.)

Over the next few years, Schwartz and his colleagues launched an ambitious program. They held three regional conferences in 1973 and five more in 1974; in addition, they and launched a series of books called *Beiträge zur Reform der Grundschule* [Contributions to elementary school reform]. By 1980--just twelve years after the founding of their organization--this series contained fifty volumes (Haarmann, 1980; Horn, 1980). From the beginning they had a double reform agenda: they advocated both "political" reforms such as reducing class size and "pedagogical" reforms such as making the school more child-centered. Very early in their history they experienced a certain official success, for in 1970 the Culture Minister's Conference (a body made up of the ministers of education from all German states) issued a document entitled Recommendations for Work in Elementary Schools, which incorporated many of their

pedagogical ideas.

Nonetheless, at the time of the organization's 1979 conference in Frankfurt, the problems identified at the 1969 conference were still largely unresolved (Haarmann, 1980b). The 2000 elementary teachers, elementary education professors, school administrators, journalists, and parents who attended heard speeches and presentations around four themes: "Living and Learning in the Elementary School," "The Elementary School--a School for All Children," "The Content of a Child-Friendly Elementary School," and "Teachers and Parents in the Elementary School." The speeches and presentations contained in the official book about the conference, put out by the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule*, suggest that achieving major reforms was difficult between 1969 and 1979. A major problem was demographic; in 1969 there were about 4 million elementary school pupils in West Germany, but by 1979 the falling birth rate had caused enrollments to drop to 3 million and the projected figure for 1984 was only 2.4 million (Frister, 1980). To the leaders of the elementary school reform movement, this meant that the government could greatly reduce class size. However, political leaders interpreted the situation differently; they thought that enrollment declines meant that fewer elementary teachers were needed. In fact, many people with elementary teaching certificates were unable to find jobs, and the number of students applying to elementary teaching preparation programs had also dropped. In speeches at the conference, Erich Frister (1980) and Kurt Warwel (1980) linked their movement's political and pedagogical reform agendas by explaining that the oversupply of teachers offered an unprecedented opportunity to make the elementary school more "humane" by reducing class size and implementing modern instructional approaches such as open instruction and individualization.

By the time the 1989 national conference was held, a distinct sense of crisis had crept into

the discourse of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule*. The conference theme was "Children Today--A Challenge for the School," and presenters identified three central problems of modern German children: (1) living secondhand, (2) living in increasing isolation, and (3) living with a threatening future (Bärsch, 1989; Bennack, 1995). In the "Frankfurt Manifesto of the 1989 Federal Elementary School Conference," delegates identified 11 problems and offered a pedagogical solution to each. The problems included "different cultural origins," "social isolation," "increased work time for parents," "spending free time with mass media," and "orientation to consumption" (Frankfurter Manifest zum Bundesgrundschulkongress 1989, 1999). In 1995, another national conference was held; this time it was jointly sponsored by the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* and two large teachers' unions, with financial support from seven organizations, including the German UNESCO Commission and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Technology (Schmitt, 1996). At this conference the Directing Chair of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* chose as the topic of his keynote address "The Elementary School--a School for All Children in View of the Changes in Childhood," stating that this was also the central theme of his organization. He argued that since the reunification of Germany the critical problems of today's children have become even more important and suggested that the solution to the problems was individualized and open instruction, the abolition of letter grades, and the hiring of more teachers. . .all reforms which would, he acknowledged, cost a great deal of money. He concluded that, "I think that in the German elementary school we are far, far away from the goal" (Schmitt, 1996, p. 28).

In May 1997, I interviewed an official of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* (which is now also called the *Grundschulverband* [Elementary School Association]) at its national headquarters in

Frankfurt. Frau Meyer (a pseudonym) told me that currently the organization has about 16,000 members and that, since it is entirely supported by dues, it relies heavily on "volunteer work from very committed people." In 1991, it changed its legal status from that of a work group [*Arbeitskreis*] to that of an association [*Verband*] because in Germany associations can take political positions and lobby while work groups cannot. Although her organization does take political positions, Meyer described it as one which transcends party lines and includes members of both the left-of- center Social Democratic Party and the right-of-center Christian Democratic Union. According to her, the states in which her organization is most influential are North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria; it has the highest concentration of membership in the vicinity of universities. Meyer considered her group to be weakest in the states which made up the former East Germany because "they are. . . very skeptical of all organizations because of the terrible experiences they had under communism." She described her organization's overall activities this way:

> Our books are very important; they are widely discussed, even in the ministries. We have a continuing education program, too, and sponsor programs to advance it. We sponsor other professional meetings as well. In addition, we do a great deal of work with the press, and as a result we receive a lot of favorable coverage. We have an Education Institute which works with students, professors, and whole schools. We work very closely with other organizations and with two labor unions, the GEW, which leans left, and the VBE, which leans right. We also publish periodicals and hold roundtables. (Field notes, 5-16-97)

The Reform Policy Agenda

The policy agenda of the elementary education reform movement is rooted in a dual discourse. One dimension of this discourse has as its central theme the way that the elementary school and its teachers are mistreated and undervalued in German society. For example, in his speech at the 1979 convention, Dietmar Bolsho referred to the elementary school as "the forgotten level of schooling" (Bolsho, 1980, p. 11). In her 1997 interview Frau Meyer elaborated at length on this theme:

> The *Grundschule* is a stepchild in the German school system; the teachers are 90% female and many of them work part time, so we are not highly respected. People say, "Oh, it's just a part time job." The idea in Germany is that the older a child is--and the smarter--the more important he is. The *Gymnasium* is the most respected school; and the *Gymnasien* get everything. It's crazy, the amount of money they pour into them. And the teachers are very powerful with their *Philologenverband* [Philologists' Association--the major professional association of the *Gymnasium* teachers]. Meanwhile, children in the *Grundschule* don't even get to attend school for a full half day--they come for only a few hours a day. (Field notes, 5-16-97)

Similarly, a recent college textbook informs pre-service elementary teachers that their future colleagues are isolated from other schools in the German system, have less social prestige than other teachers, have the largest classes, and receive the lowest pay (Gassen, 1995). To a great extent the "political" agenda of the movement seeks to address these inequities. For example, the elementary school reformers have long advocated that elementary children attend school for the entire period from 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., that class sizes be reduced, and that elementary teachers be paid as much as secondary teachers.

In addition to its "political" agenda, however, the movement has a pedagogical agenda. Its pedagogical reform proposals grow out of a discourse of social crisis which describes how much childhood has changed in recent decades. For example, in his foreword to one of the books published by the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule*, Walter Bärsch, president of the German Child Protection Federation, paints a pessimistic picture of modern society and of the children which it produces. According to him, most contemporary children are out of touch with nature because they live in cities where they have insufficient space to express their "natural liveliness" (p. 7). They also watch too much television, play too many computer games, and are overly concerned about wearing stylish clothes. Family life has deteriorated, too, because of the "dissolution of the natural life context into separated domains of home, work, shopping, free time, school" (p. 8). Relationships between parents and children are strained, and German families now have an average of just 1.5 children, meaning that there are many self-centered only children in the schools. Divorce, single parent households, and unemployment have further undermined family life. As a result, many children are unhealthy, have psychological problems, are overly passive, lack first-hand experiences, and are anxious about the future. This means that "the human must have first priority in our schools" (p. 9) and that schools must become "social living spaces" (p. 10). Writing in another *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* book, Faust-Siehl and others (1996) assert: "In Germany the elementary school is 75 years old. It no longer meets the requirements of our time. Radical social changes require new models" (p. 11). By and large, the proposed pedagogical reforms grow out of the discourse of social crisis and changed childhood.

The general outlines of the elementary education reform agenda are sketched out with great consistency in a wide range of sources in my data: conference speeches, interviews, in-

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service programs, and textbooks used in pre-service teacher preparation. However, for this paper I have drawn the agenda from two documents which appeared on the Web site of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* in 1999, Frankfurter Manifest zum Bundesgrundschulkongress 1989 [Frankfurt Manifesto from the 1989 Federal Elementary School Congress] and 10 Standpunkte zur Grundschulreform: Grundsatzprogramm des Grundschulverbandes [Ten Positions on Elementary School Reform: The Basic Program of the Elementary School Association]. These positions are summarized in Table 1 (See Appendix) under the headings "Political Reforms" and "Pedagogical Reforms."

An analysis of this agenda using Paris's (1995) typology of education reforms suggests that it most closely resembles the moral/civic variant of the common school theme. For example, three of the political reforms (inclusion, extension of the elementary school to six years, and admission of all six year olds to first grade) would make the *Grundschule* more of a common school than it already is. A number of the pedagogical reforms are aimed at teaching children to live as good citizens in both the school community and the larger national community; these include multicultural education, self-directed learning, helping to plan instruction, social learning, media education, the discovery of one's own life world, and the encouragement of physical and psychological health.

In Bernstein's terms, many of the pedagogical reforms are typical of those used in invisible pedagogies. For example, the abolition of letter grades is characteristic of an invisible pedagogy. The classification of the German elementary school would be weakened by team teaching, open instruction, and making the discovery of one's own life world part of the curriculum. Such reforms as letting children help plan instruction; instituting individualized, differentiated learning,

and self-directed learning would weaken the framing of the school. Other reforms, such as greater freedom for schools to develop a distinctive profile, appropriate school buildings and grounds, and the encouragement of creativity are linked to the desire to use open instruction.

Several of the reforms are specific to the German setting. These include the complete half day of school, extension of teacher preparation to four years, the maintenance of neighborhood schools, admission of all six year olds to first grade, 30 weekly hours of instruction, and equal pay scales for all teachers. A few of the proposed reforms, however, resemble those seen in many countries today. For example, teachers everywhere seem to demand smaller class sizes. Multicultural education, media education and inclusion, though not part of the international education reform agenda as it is commonly described in the policy literature, are nonetheless widely advocated. Only one reform on this agenda appears in the international education reform movement as it is commonly described--greater freedom for schools to develop a distinctive profile. However, the German educators whom I interviewed seek this reform, not in order to provide greater parental choice or to encourage competition between schools. Rather they seek it in order to be able to implement an effective invisible pedagogy in specific local settings.

The Extent of the Implementation of the Reforms

Of course, it is always essential to ask to what extent reform agendas have been adopted and implemented; for as American policy research clearly shows, issues can remain on a reform agenda for a long time without being formally adopted and policies which have been formally adopted are by no means always implemented. My data suggest that very little of either agenda has been adopted or implemented. Probably the push for class size reduction has been most successful. Between 1969 and 1979, average class size in German elementary schools dropped

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from 36 pupils per class to 27 (Gerbaulet, 1980). Some evidence also suggests that state ministries of education are giving schools more autonomy so that they can develop their own distinctive profiles. For example, in the Rhineland-Palatinate the number of inspectors was being sharply reduced because schools are not going to be as closely supervised in the future as they have been in the past. However, my data raise especially strong doubts about the extent of the implementation of the pedagogical reform agenda as a whole. Although most of the documents which I gathered and all of the state ministry of education officials and inspectors whom I interviewed supported it strongly, I never heard a teacher or principal endorse it and my observations suggest that it has not been widely implemented.

My first doubts about the implementation of the pedagogical reform agenda surfaced during my first school visit to a German elementary school; this establishment was near Bonn, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. On this visit I was accompanied by Frau Kröger (a pseudonym), who worked in the state ministry of education. Since I had requested a chance to visit a school, she had arranged for me to visit the school in which she had served as principal for ten years before accepting the ministry position. On the way to the school she told me that "in North Rhine-Westphalia they are moving to more progressive methods of teaching, learning especially from the ideas of Freinet, Montessori, and Paulsen" (Field notes, 9-25-96). She indicated that the school I would see was "pretty typical in having adopted a lot of progressive teaching ideas" (Field notes, 9-25-96). Frau Kröger and the principal, Frau Hentig (also a pseudonym), accompanied me as we observed in four classrooms. Our first stop was a first grade in which the children were studying a unit on apples; accordingly, they were making apple sauce on a hot plate, a mobile showing apples hung from the ceiling, and the children said "apple" for

me in English, Spanish, and French. Our next class was a second grade in which the children gathered around their teacher, Frau Mollendorf (a pseudonym), as she "read them letters from a newspaper about wishes which children had expressed in their letters" (Field notes, 9-25-96). This activity lasted for quite awhile, and the children became visibly restless. Suddenly, Frau Kröger exclaimed to me: "We're all wondering where she's leading with this! She's just wasting time" (Field notes, 9-25-96). Thereupon she stood up and insisted that we leave the room in the middle of the lesson. Outside in the courtyard Frau Kröger and Frau Hentig apologized for showing me such poor teaching, and one of them said: "And she knew we were coming! She could have prepared something!" (Field notes, 9-25-96). We visited third and fourth grade classes whose teachers fortunately were using more progressive approaches; then we went to the teachers' lounge where coffee and cookies had been laid out on a prettily set table. Soon the second grade teacher, Frau Mollendorf, entered, carrying a large poster decorated with the wishes which her pupils had written after the completion of their discussion of the newspaper letters. She announced loudly that it was a shame we had left her classroom so early since the children had prepared an English song to sing to us. Then, helping herself to coffee, she began to criticize the ministry for asking teachers to do more and more with fewer and fewer resources. Angrily, Frau Kröger informed Frau Mollendorf that if she felt overburdened, "she must ask herself: How can I teach differently?" (Field notes, 9-25-96). Frau Mollendorf seemed unimpressed by this advice, and the principal then chimed in to express her own view that the more the ministry asked them to do, the fewer the resources it gave them.

My visit to a school located near Merzig in the Saarland raised even more questions. There I spent about two hours interviewing two inspectors, Herr Kastenmann and Herr Langhals,

an elementary principal, Herr Grabenow, and a woman who taught part time and coordinated in-service programs part time, Frau Overdieck (all pseudonyms). During the interview, the inspectors and Frau Overdieck assured me that many progressive reforms were currently being implemented in German elementary schools and even gave me a copy of a report on progressive education reforms which had just come out in North Rhine-Westphalia. When I asked what types of pedagogy they considered progressive, they responded "free work, open instruction, projects, independence, hands-on activities" (Field notes, 10-14-96). They expressed the view that the new methods were taking hold, and the catalogue of their in-service education offerings which they gave me contained mostly sessions on how to use the progressive methods of teaching which they mentioned in their interview (Landesinstitut für Pädagogik und Medien, 1996). Yet when they took me to observe a third grade language arts class--taught by the principal, who was a teacher as well as an administrator--I saw a rather traditional lesson in which whole group instruction was used, the children took turns reading the story aloud, the teacher led a discussion of the story, and finally two boys acted it out. Later, Herr Kastenmann and Herr Langhals went to some pains to assure me that Herr Grabenow had been using a "mixed" pedagogy in his classroom, not a purely traditional one.

After this group interview, Frau Overdieck and I went to a restaurant for lunch without the inspectors and principal, and I had a chance to interview her alone. As we waited for our meal, she became more and more open and began to complain about the fact that the school system expected her to subsidize her school by buying many materials and supplies with her own money. I seized this opportunity to say that, given the financial situation which everyone was complaining about, I was rather surprised that teachers were being urged to adopt expensive

pedagogies like projects and open instruction which required many more materials and games than traditional methodologies. Frau Overdieck agreed with me and confided that she was going through a personal crisis, finding it harder and harder to present in-services in which she encouraged teachers to undertake teaching approaches which required them to spend a lot of their own money and free time without additional compensation. She said that she was even considering resigning as the in-service coordinator because of the "quandary" she was in over these issues.

In the Rhineland-Palatinate, some of the schools which I visited were using progressive pedagogies, but many were not; after each visit, the inspectress who accompanied me made a point of praising those who had changed their techniques and criticizing those who had not. Nonetheless, I was left wondering if she had not found it difficult to locate even a few progressive classrooms to show me. The most progressive school which I visited was the school in which Frau Meyer of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* taught fourth grade. There I saw Frau Meyer and her class develop a schedule for the day and also observed in a first grade classroom which made extensive use of learning centers. Even so, elements of traditional teaching were still quite evident in some of the classrooms.

My observations are consistent with research findings about which Rudolf Schmitt, Directing Chair of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule*, complained in his welcome speech at the 1995 national conference in Berlin. He cited the findings of two studies. At the time of his speech, a doctoral candidate at the University of Bremen had just reported on a study which she had conducted in 1992 in an inspectoral district near Bremen. In a survey of all the elementary principals in the district, she found that only 18% of instructional time was devoted to open

instruction and that less than 10% of the teachers used only open instruction. Similarly, a study which was carried out in 1988-1989 in the Cologne district--which is located in North Rhine-Westphalia, one of the two states which Frau Meyer mentioned as being especially supportive of the reforms--found that in 612 elementary schools none was using individualized instruction to teach reading. The most common reason given by teachers was that they were afraid that using individualized instruction would hamper student progress in reading (Schmitt, 1996).

In summary, then, it would seem that the elementary education reform movement has met with only limited success. Its leaders seem to have succeeded in shaping the pedagogical discourse of most elementary education professors, elementary school administrators, and ministry officials. In these circles, I encountered very few dissenting voices. Yet, few of the political reforms have been adopted and the implementation of the pedagogical reforms in schools appears to be limited and spotty. This suggests that the leaders of the movement have failed to convince either politicians or classroom teachers--the two groups on whom the success of their reform movement most depends.

Political Supporters and Opponents of the Reforms

Because of the nature of my data, my findings in this section must be very tentative. It is challenging to study Germany politics because the federal structure of the national government and the fact that educational policy falls under the state governments means that it is very difficult to determine exactly who supports and opposes any given educational policy. Several states do not appear in my data sources at all. However, it is possible to draw on several sources to sketch the following picture of the politics of the elementary school reform movement.

The *Arbeitskreis Grundschule, e.V.*--now officially called the *Grundschulverband*,

although it continues to use its original name, too--seems to be at the heart of the movement. Its membership consists of 16,000-20,000 elementary teachers, principals, higher administrators, and elementary education professors. The organization is closely allied with two large teachers' unions--the leftish GEW and the rightish VBE; indeed, the *Arbeitskreis* and the two unions jointly sponsored the 1995 national conference. The organizations which provided financial subsidies for that event and its list of invited guests suggest the nature of the broader coalition which supports the core group of activists. Financial assistance was given by: the Philosophy Department of Humboldt University in Berlin, the German UNESCO Commission, Action Humane School, the Association for Allergic Children, the Federal Association for a New Education, the German Child Protection League, and the Federal Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Technology (Schmitt, 1996). This list suggests that, outside of the core coalition, the strongest support for the elementary education reform movement comes from organizations which work in the general areas of education and children's physical and emotional health. The list of guests invited to the conference suggests who is regarded as less supportive, but nonetheless potentially helpful. It includes the Federal Parents Council, parent organizations from eight states, the parties represented in the Federal parliament, foundations close to these parties, churches, business groups, the Pediatricians' Professional Association, and the Children's Commission of the Federal Parliament (Schmitt, 1996). The strongest supporters for the reforms seem to be members of what Bernstein (1996) calls the "new middle class;" thus, their support of these reforms is not surprising in terms of my theoretical framework.

Although the speakers at the conferences often speak of their opposition, it is not entirely clear who this opposition is. In her interview, Frau Meyer of the *Arbeitskreis* identified the

Philologenverband [Philologists' Association], an association of *Gymnasium* teachers as a powerful opponent of their reform agenda. My Internet research provided some support for her claim, since I found a press release issued by the Bavarian Philologists' Association in 1997 which did indeed attack "the tendency toward fun schools which don't give grades in some states" (Bayerischer Philologenverband, 1997). In addition, in his welcoming speech at the 1995 conference, the president of the GEW, Dieter Wunder, stated that they should ignore criticisms coming from the *Gymnasium* (Wunder, 1996). Ordinary classroom teachers seem to be the enemy in some of the interviews. For example, Frau Kröger of the ministry in North Rhine-Westphalia explained to me that some teachers don't like to change and therefore change comes slowly while in the Saarland the inspectors Herr Langhals and Herr Kastenmann indicated that older teachers don't like to change, and since the average age of German teachers is about 50, change is hard to bring about. Some of the documents also complained about individual parents who, at the school level, were obsessed with their children's chances of getting into a *Gymnasium*, and therefore looked askance at pedagogical innovations. For example, in one of the many books published by the *Arbeitskreis*, Elise Kentner, principal of a school in Cologne, wrote about some parents who opposed her introduction of pedagogical innovations into her school: "Goal-oriented parents who focused on measurable performance vehemently demanded that their children be placed in an age-graded class or enrolled them in a religious school" (Kentner, 1996, p. 86).

My Internet research yielded an interesting set of documents which provides further insight into the politics of the elementary school reform movement. In 1997 and 1998, at least four state ministries of education announced reforms of elementary education consistent with the policy agenda of the *Arbeitskreis* and its allies. Best documented is "Elementary School Reform

2000," announced in March of 1998 by the Berlin Administration for Schools, Youth and Sports. To a great extent the proposed reforms appear to have been lifted directly from the agenda of the *Arbeitskreis*. The seven planks in the reform platform were: (1) a more flexible first year of school; (2) individualization of the early weeks of school; (3) development of a reliable half day program for the elementary school; (4) encouragement of disadvantaged children; (5) beginning a foreign language in third grade; (6) developing a distinctive profile and differentiating instruction in grades 5 and 6; (7) computer programs in elementary school (Grundschulreform 2000, 1998). All of these except numbers 5 and 7 have clear linkages with the reform agenda presented in Table 1, and the early introduction of a foreign language, which does not appear there, is advocated in some other publications of the *Arbeitskreis*. This pronouncement by educational authorities stimulated responses from several groups in Berlin. In a position paper, the elementary principals' association adopted an open, but cautious stance. It suggested that the reforms be gradually introduced and that pilot projects be conducted and evaluated as part of this gradual introduction. It also expressed the concern that the necessary conditions for the success of the reforms do not currently exist in the elementary schools of the city of Berlin; pre-eminent among these necessary conditions was the requisite financial support (Stellungnahme der IBS zum Positionspapier "Grundschulreform 2000," 1998). In an official statement, the District Parents' Commission expressed support for some aspects of the reform agenda but sharply condemned what it saw as an attempt of the ministry to play one group of parents off against another (Stellungnahme zum BSB-Beschluß, 1998). Finally, the State Student Council issued a reaction in the spring of 1999, expressing support of some of the elementary school reforms but strongly condemning the use of differentiated learning in grades 5 and 6 (Thesenpapier der

LandesschülerInnenkonferenz-Berlin, 1999). This set of documents suggests that although the school administration backs the reform agenda, other important stakeholders have some reservations about it.

The evidence from three other states is less complete, but nonetheless suggestive. In Bavaria, the state ministry of education had been discussing implementing the full half day of school in elementary schools in some time, but in the winter of 1999 it changed its plans under pressure from the conservative CSU state government which preferred to spend its limited resources on the middle status secondary school type, the *Realschule*. Christine Goertz of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) strongly attacked this decision, asserting that the SPD "sets the pedagogical concept of the reliable half day elementary school against the 'cheap act' of the state government" (Das erste Opfer der R6, 1999). A similar reform proposal had been introduced in the parliament of the Rhineland-Palatinate in 1997 where it had sparked a conflict between the Christian Democratic Government and two smaller parties, the Green Party and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). Herr Kuhn of the FDP had seized this opportunity to attack the reform coalition which he saw as the originator of the idea, exclaiming: "Let's finally do away with the fun school in the Rhineland-Palatinate! A new learning culture and achievement ethic must be introduced in our schools" (Grundschulreform in Rheinland-Pfalz, 1997). The Green Party was more circumspect in its position; applauding the general concept, it expressed doubts that the amount of money budgeted by the Christian Democrats would be sufficient to support it. Finally, the minister of education in Lower Saxony had proposed the adoption of the full half day school in 1997, sparking opposition from the Christian Democrats in her state who argued that the proposal would set elementary school parents (who wanted free child care services) against

elementary school techers (who refused to consider baby sitting part of their professional responsibility) (Auch in Oldenburg heftige Diskussionen um Grundschulreform, 1997).

This evidence suggests that the elementary education reform movement has strong support in one are of government--the education ministries--but that considerable opposition to its program exists, not only among politicians eager to save money but also among skeptical grassroots educators. Possibly, this internal opposition led to the defeat of GEW president Dieter Wunder in May 1997 and his replacement by a woman teacher from the former East Germany. On the day that I observed in her school, Frau Meyer had just come from the GEW convention where the election had been held and she had been a delegate. In the car on the way to the train station, she told me that he had been defeated because many teachers felt that the GEW had betrayed them and was advocating reforms which were not beneficial to teachers.

In short, the political terrain on which the battle for the elementary education reform agenda is being fought is a complex and rapidly shifting one. My evidence suggests that the reforms, while supported by some important policy actors, have not garnered strong support among rank and file educators.

Discussion

This discussion will be divided into three parts: (1) an analysis of the German elementary education reform movement in relationship to education reform movements in other countries; (2) an explanation of the differences, using Wirt and Harman's (1986a) theory of how international trends influence national education policy; and (

3) an explanation of the differences as a response to a legitimacy crisis.

Analysis of the Reform Movement

Although this paper has stressed the unique aspects of the German elementary education reform movement, it is important to also notice how it resembles reform movements in other developed countries. First, it is significant that there is a reform movement. Since the early 1980s, educational systems throughout the developed world have been marked by calls for reform. Germany elementary education is no exception to this rule; though the reform agenda differs from the norm in several ways, a reform movement does exist. Also, as in other nations the reform movement is rooted in a sense of crisis--as, no doubt, reform movements usually are. The German definition of the crisis is, however, different from that which prevails elsewhere. Those who seek to reform the German elementary school describe a crisis in childhood which has its roots deep in the social changes of our time whereas the education reform movements of other countries are commonly justified by a sense of economic crisis resulting from globalization. Moreover, several of the political reforms which the movement advocates (shown in Table 1) are not unique. Concerns about class size are widespread around the world, and the desire to equalize teacher pay scales has been a component of educational reform in other countries, such as France, where the remuneration of elementary and secondary teachers has historically been different. Similarly, Germany is not unusual in seeking to extend the length of elementary teacher preparation programs; this reform has been sought, and in many cases achieved, by several other countries of Western Europe. And, of course, inclusion is a reform which has been widely advocated and implemented throughout the Western world.

Where the political reform agenda is unique, it almost always reflects the unique characteristics of the German elementary school. It is almost alone in Europe in being a four year program, providing less than a half day of instruction, and following a policy of assigning a high

percentage of six-year-olds who are deemed "unready" for school to a preparatory program. The leaders of the German elementary education reform movement are well aware of the fact that their schools are "deviant cases" in comparison to those of other nations; indeed, they often refer to the practices of other European countries, especially the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian nations, as justification for their proposed reforms.

It is the pedagogical reform agenda which differs most strikingly from the reform agendas of other nations. Concerns about achievement, accountability, and choice are not evident on this list. In fact, the only plank of the agenda which is found in many other countries is the call for more autonomy at the local school level. Otherwise, the reform agenda reads like the reform agendas of the 1960s and early 1970s--and, indeed, it was originally developed then. However, unlike the "open space" and individualized learning movement which typified the U.S. at that time and the reforms which followed in the U.K. in the wake of the Plowden Report, this agenda is still alive and well in Germany. The question is: Why? My tentative answers to this question follow.

Explanations Based on Wirt and Harman

Wirt and Harman (1986a) argue that international trends are mediated through a "prism" of national characteristics which includes a country's economic condition, political structure, and distinctive values. I will explore each of these factors in relation to the German case. Invisible pedagogies--which, in order to succeed, require small class sizes, time for teachers to plan, much cooperation between teachers, and an abundance of materials--are expensive pedagogies (Bernstein, 1975, 1996). It is therefore not surprising that the elementary education reform agenda was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Germany was still enjoying the economic ebullience of the Wirtschaftswunder. However, like other Western countries, Germany

began to experience economic slowdowns in the middle and late 1970s, followed by unemployment problems as the 1980s unfolded. Also like other countries, she has felt the impact of global competition. Unlike other countries since 1990 she has also felt the economic pressures caused by the integration of the former East Germany. Nonetheless, the elementary educational reform agenda has been maintained intact as a kind of fossil remnant of the 1960s in the midst of severe economic stresses; Germany's economic situation during the last 25 years does not explain this fact. It is important to look at other facets of Wirt and Harman's "prism."

To what extent can this difference be explained by reference to Germany's political system? Wirt and Harman identify three factors of political systems which they consider significant in relationship to policy development: whether the country has a unitary of federal structure; whether it has a presidential or parliamentary government; and whether it has a one party, two party, or multi-party system. Germany has a federal structure, a parliamentary government, and a multi-party system. None of these political characteristics is distinctive enough to explain the difference. This is made apparent by the fact that of the three other countries to which Germany is most frequently compared, the U.S. is also federal, the U.K. is also parliamentary, and France is also multi-party; yet, all three of these nations have had much more typical educational reform movements than has Germany.

However, Wirt and Harman do not incorporate interest group structure and composition into their "prism," and part of the difference may lie in this important aspect of the political system. Jepperson and Meyer (1991) argue that there are four types of polities: (1) the liberal/individualist, of which the U.S. is "the archetypical example" (p. 220); (2) the corporatist, of which Germany is the typical example; (3) the national statist, best exemplified by France; and

(4) the "state outside society," which is common in Latin America. Each polity has its own approach to interest representation; Germany's is "corporatist." Jepperson and Meyer (1991) assert that corporatist interest representation "constructs not actors and interests, but people and groups as agents performing legitimated social functions" (p. 222). In such a structure formally recognized interest groups bargain with the government and are legitimated by "myths. . .about the national community and its putative requirements" (p. 222). The organizations involved are rational bureaucracies "with linkages to political, economic, and cultural centers, and with less emphasis on participation and differentiation at the bottom" (p. 222). This form of interest mediation magnifies the political impact of status groups. Although I have not fully explored the implications of this corporatist polity structure for the German elementary education reform movement, Jepperson and Meyer's description does seem rather accurate in respect to it. In particular, the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* appears to act as a peak association which advocates, not the individual interests of its members but policies which its leaders perceive as essential to the well-being of the national community. The leaders of the *Arbeitskreis* seem to have numerous ties with the leaders of other groups to which elementary educators belong, but relatively weak connections with their own grassroots constituents. Their close relationship with both the state and federal ministries of education also seems to be characteristic of corporatist interest representation. It is not entirely clear how this structure affects the reform movement, but it may well explain the high degree of consensus among people in relatively high positions in elementary education and the sense that the reforms are necessary in order to save German society from the negative effects of social disintegration.

Another important aspect of interest representation is the composition of the groups

involved in developing a policy agenda. The German elementary education reform agenda seems to have been shaped almost entirely by elementary educators, elementary education professors, and various child protection organizations working collaboratively with parent groups. Significantly missing from the debate are representatives of German business. In more theoretical terms, the agenda was developed by members of the new middle class who work in agencies of symbolic control with little or no input from the old middle class, which exercises occupations close to actual production (Bernstein, 1975, 1996). It would be inaccurate to conclude that German business has no interest in education policy. On the contrary, Fishman and Martin (1987) mention the importance of business interests in shaping education policy in the former West Germany. However, German business seems primarily interested in secondary education. The leaders of the elementary education reform movement complain that the elementary school is "neglected," and it appears that business groups are among the policy actors who largely ignore it. In contrast, in the U.S. and the U.K. business interests have played a leading role in setting the education reform agenda for all levels of schooling. It is not surprising, then, that the German elementary reform movement does not emphasize such concerns as efficiency and accountability to the extent that the education reforms in those two countries have.

Finally, Wirt and Harman (1986a) argue that national values shape educational policy. It is perhaps important, then, that Germans are less individualistic and more group oriented than are people in many developed countries (Hofstede, 1984). Possibly it is the high value which they place on the collective which has led the leaders of the elementary education reform movement to define the contemporary social crisis as one of excessive individualism and to advocate the "moral/civic" version of the common school (Paris, 1995) as a way to address this problem

through education.

My study suggests that Wirt and Harman (1996a) omitted one important social factor from their national "prism"--demographics. In my opinion, it is extremely significant that the leaders of the elementary education reform movement began to push for reforms whose effective implementation required reducing class size at a time when enrollments in German elementary schools were declining precipitously. Such enrollment drops meant not only that the number of jobs available for elementary teachers was shrinking, but that the need for elementary education preparation programs in higher education was dwindling, too. The founder of the *Arbeitskreis Grundschule* many of its early leaders were professors in such programs. Neither they nor the teachers and administrators in the elementary schools could have felt happy about a future in which their job security would be very fragile. As a result, it was natural for them to feel the appeal of an invisible pedagogy which would require drastic reductions in class size if it was to succeed. Moreover, demographics may also explain the persistence of this reform agenda over the last three decades. The German elementary teaching establishment--including teachers, administrators, and teacher educators--is unusually old because of the massive hiring done during the late 1950s and 1960s in order to meet the needs of the Baby Boom, followed by the rapid decline in the birth rate in the 1970s and 1980s. In several of the schools I visited, principals complained that almost all their teachers were over 50, and my observations supported the accuracy of their perceptions. The elementary teacher education professorate is also very "gray." It is common in Germany for authors to provide their year of birth in the biographical note about them. The average age of the authors of the teacher education texts was so high that, even before I encountered complaints about the age of teachers, I began to routinely note it for each volume

which examined. Almost all of the authors were over 50, many were over 60, and an occasional Methuselah was over 70. This means that at all levels German elementary education is dominated by people who were early in their careers when open education was an international buzz word and the Plowden Report was widely discussed (Gruber, 1987). The relative lack of younger people in leadership positions may have protected German elementary education from the newer ideas which circulate in the global education arena.

Issues of Legitimacy

The British sociologist Basil Bernstein (1971) argues that education reforms which replace older invisible pedagogies with newer, invisible ones indicate an underlying crisis in the system. Specifically, he writes:

> [T]he movement away from [visible pedagogies] to [invisible ones] symbolizes that there is a crisis in society's basic classifications and frames, and therefore a crisis in its structures of power and principles of control. . . .From this point of view [invisible pedagogies] are symptoms of a moral crisis rather than the terminal state of an educational system. (Bernstein, 1971, p. 226.

Bernstein's thesis, in conjunction with the legitimation crisis of the state so often addressed by German scholars who study education policy such as Weiler (1990) and Weiss (1993), suggests that it is also important to consider how the German elementary education reform movement might relate to a broader crisis of legitimacy.

I believe that it relates to it in at least two ways. First, elementary educators in Germany feel that their own legitimacy as educators is and always has been questioned by the larger education establishment. Founded under the Weimar Republic as a fiercely contested common

school, scorned during the Nazi period, staffed by teachers with lesser credentials than secondary teachers, and largely feminized, German elementary educators perceive their school as the "stepchild" of their educational system. Therefore, it is natural for them to struggle to increase their own legitimacy. When the movement was founded in the 1960s, the German education policy world was abuzz with talk of reforms of secondary education, especially with talk of setting up comprehensive secondary schools. This meant that it was legitimating for elementary educators to announce that their level of the school system also required extensive reform. The idea for comprehensive secondary schools came from abroad, primarily from the U.S. but also from the Scandinavian countries which were in the process of reforming their own secondary schools. As is well known, the careful selection of foreign authorities for one's actions can bolster one's prestige and therefore one's legitimacy. The elementary educators followed suit, citing the British infant school, Scandinavian education, and the work of the Italian Maria Montessori as sources for their ideas, along with some thoroughly German pedagogues. The reform movement also gave them a vehicle for generating press coverage and stimulating interest in ministries of education, teachers' unions, and political parties. In short, the movement raised their visibility and therefore their status, making them feel less inferior and providing needed legitimacy for their work.

However, it would be a mistake not to also consider a second, broader legitimacy issue. The elementary school reform movement has unfolded against the backdrop of a growing crisis in secondary education. In the last thirty years, the traditional tripartite secondary system--which depends on selection at the end of the elementary school--has become increasingly dysfunctional. Today, it is eroding badly as more and more parents insist on placements in a *Gymnasium* or

Realschule for their offspring, rejecting the *Hauptschule* which is increasingly a school for the poor, the slow, and the foreign. This represents a real legitimation crisis in secondary education. Elementary school teachers have not been untouched by this development. On the contrary, they have been at the heart of it because they are the ones who provide the basic educational skills which, to a great extent, determine the academic futures of their pupils. In fact, early in the period of the reform movement, they were the ones who decided which type of secondary school their pupils would attend; and, even though increasingly parents are permitted to decide, elementary teachers must often make a recommendation or counsel parents about the best options for their children. Obviously, this is not an easy position to be in; it is easy to imagine how enormous the pressures must become at times and how often parents must blame elementary teachers for their children's deficiencies and failures. In such a situation, it is easy to understand why teachers would seek ways to soften and blur the role which they play. A more invisible pedagogy seems an ideal way to do this. As the teacher fades into the background and the children become more "self-directed," it becomes harder to assign blame and school seems a friendlier place. In short, by creating a more "benign" elementary program, elementary teachers may be not only making their own positions less stressful but also shoring up the legitimacy of the entire schools system and, beyond it, the state (Fowler, Boyd, & Plank, 1993).

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Table 1. The Elementary School Reform Agenda

Political Reforms	Pedagogical Reforms
Complete half day of school	Greater freedom for schools to develop a distinctive profile
Inclusion	Multicultural education
Extension of elementary school to six years	Abolition of letter grades
Extension of elementary teacher preparation to four years	Team teaching
Maximum of 24 pupils per class	School building appropriate for children
30 weekly hours of instruction per class	School grounds appropriate for children
Extra financial resources for reforming schools	Self-directed learning
Maintain neighborhood schools	Children help plan instruction
Equal pay scales for all teachers	Individualized, differentiated instruction
16-20 pupils per class in grades 1 and 2	Social learning
Admission of all six year olds to first grade	Open instruction
	Media education
	Discovery of one's own life world
	Encouragement of creativity
	Encouragement of physical health
	Encouragement of psychological health